

The Role of the Student of Freedom

A Student of Freedom can be defined as an individual who advocates the basic principles of freedom and their application; i.e., the right to private property, the right to work and to consume as one pleases, and the right to dispose of whatever fruits the individual reaps from his labor - free from government interference. The Student of Freedom should somehow seek to educate society that "just a little socialism" is akin to being "just a little pregnant," and that ever increasing doses of government may someday lead to an overdose.

The individual who is committed to these principles faces seemingly insurmountable problems. Mere existence in a society that is riddled with governmental restraints and encroachments on individual freedom constantly challenges the Freedom Advocate's ideals. Unless the Student of Freedom is surrounded by those of his intellectual persuasion, conversations with friends and family usually break down into a theoretical debate. Worst of all, the Student of Freedom is confronted with the myriad of so-called "benefits" originating from the government transfer agencies. When it can be shown that nearly half of our incomes are being directed towards government in one way or another, the temptation of getting one's "share" becomes a strong one. Although

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Obviously, the Student of Freedom has good intent. He has confronted the fact that the continuation of a welfare state promotes the disintegration of individual liberty, and he has confronted the fact that it is economically unfeasible to "get something for nothing" - that someone, somewhere, must pay for the programs and benefits offered. However, it is difficult to carry out the action necessary to combat the dominance of socialistic thought. This action is, quite simply, total refusal to accept any form of compensation from a transfer agency that can voluntarily be turned down. A prime example is that of the individual enrolled in a college or graduate school. The student is sorely tempted to accept a Federal or state grant when confronted by steadily rising costs. Accepting this aid, however, condones the existence of the agencies which distribute it, which the Student of Freedom is against.

How then does the Student of Freedom deal with this dilemma? The answer lies in the motives of the individual. In order for someone to turn down a Federal grant, there must be strong motivation, for it is the motive behind that action which makes that action both accomplishable and justified. Dr. Hans Sennholz states that "A good motive may exculpate a poor action, but a bad motive vitiates even the finest action."¹ Such motivation must be constantly reinforced, because for every inch of headway the Student of Freedom may make against his intellectual foes, he will find that the opposition may have ten reasons to go the other way.

This reinforcement comes from constantly seeking knowledge. The individual must enlighten himself to the real nature of liberty before society can be enlightened. Leonard Read says it better than anyone else. "Ever so many of us believe it consists in 'selling the masses.' This is just as farfetched or unrealistic as selling the multitudes on becoming galactic explorers. Heightened consciousness - knowledge, wisdom, awareness, perception - cannot be sold....Each individual is in charge of his own doors or perception and he absorbs only that which he wishes."² Read continues in his book, The Love of Liberty, saying that if a degree of excellence in Liberty is maintained, others will seek your knowledge, and then the changes will start. "There are tens of thousands in the U.S.A. today who favor the idea and practice of liberty. The improved practice depends upon the improved reception of the idea, for ideas are indeed real and have consequences. The results come from the examples we set."³

If the Student of Freedom is strongly motivated enough, the dilemma will disappear. When the Student of Freedom becomes enlightened enough, there will be no question whether to accept a transfer payment or not. The answer becomes self-evident. To accept any type of benefit from an entity that is, knowingly or unknowingly, promoting a socialistic order will become a moral error. No longer will it be merely a question of "good economics", it will become a moral issue.

When the point is reached where the principles of Liberty are ingrained upon people's minds in a way that they become moral issues, the Student of Freedom will then be able to take a moment and survey the wondrous results. Not only will the ideals that provided the basis for the world's greatest societies be applied again and hopefully salvage our own society, but the great creative surges of the past will be seen again.

Dr. Sennholz sums it up in this way. "We do not know whether our great republic will survive this century. If it can be saved, great men of conviction must lead the way -- men who with religious fervor and unbounded courage resist all transfer temptations. The heroes of Liberty are no less remarkable for what they suffer, than for what they achieve."⁴

¹Excerpted from "You Cannot Get Even," an unpublished essay by Dr. Hans F. Sennholz.

²Read, Leonard, The Love of Liberty, Irvington, NY, The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., 1975, p. 147.

³Ibid, p. 119.

⁴from "You Cannot Get Even."